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# Latest Study Reinforces Cosmetic Talc, Mesothelioma Link

## ASBESTOS EXPOSURE & BANS

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Evidence continues to mount that prolonged exposure to cosmetic talcum powder contaminated by asbestos fibers is causing mesothelioma cancer.

Individuals using cosmetic talc regularly may be putting themselves at higher risk, according to doctors at Peninsula Pathology Associates in Newport News, Virginia. They recently completed the

most extensive case study to date on the topic.

Mesothelioma is an aggressive cancer caused primarily by the inhalation or ingestion of asbestos fibers.

Peninsula's study involved 75 mesothelioma patients — including 64 women — who believed their only exposure to asbestos was through cosmetic talcum powder.

The American Journal of Industrial Medicine published the study in March, just five months after a similar study at the Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell in New York detailed 33 other cases.

"The findings of the present, and other recent studies, suggest that cosmetic talc may be a cause of malignant mesothelioma," the latest co-authors wrote. "The present study supports the contention."

## **Mesothelioma Is More Than an Occupational Disease**

The evidence may help explain the growing number of mesothelioma patients — mostly women — who do not fit the stereotype of blue-collar workers exposed occupationally to asbestos.

"Cosmetic talc may account for a percentage of the malignant mesotheliomas previously reported as 'idiopathic,' especially in women," lead author Dr. Theresa Emory told MedicalResearch.com.

Emory, along with co-author Dr. John Maddox, declined to speak with The Mesothelioma Center at Asbestos.com to provide additional insight.

Both authors have testified in prior asbestos litigation, primarily for plaintiffs. Cases for the study were reviewed as part of medical and legal consultation.

## **Growing Evidence of Asbestos Contamination in Talc**

Of the 75 cases used in the study, 11 were examined for asbestos fibers, which are recognized as carcinogenic by the scientific and medical communities.

Non-tumorous tissues examined in all 11 showed the presence of anthophyllite or tremolite, asbestos types that are rarely found in industrial exposure cases.

Earlier in March, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced that it had found asbestos-contaminated talc in nine of the 52 cosmetic products it tested throughout a year-long study. All have been recalled.

The most notable finding came in October when the FDA found traces of asbestos in one lot of Johnson's Baby Powder. The findings have helped fuel thousands of lawsuits by those who believe they were harmed by the product.

## **Debate Continues on Talc's Mesothelioma Connection**

Johnson & Johnson, like many of the other manufacturers, has disputed the findings, insisting that its product is safe and asbestos-free.

The complex testing methods of products have been debated for many years. The science has often been inconclusive. So has the exact quantification of asbestos minerals.

Talc and asbestos frequently are found in close proximity to the earth's surface, where they are mined and often mixed. Talc contaminated by asbestos fibers also has been identified in makeup products, children's toys and crayons.

Also being debated is whether there are other causes of peritoneal mesothelioma beyond asbestos, particularly in women. Unlike the more common pleural mesothelioma that is in the thoracic cavity, peritoneal mesothelioma starts in the lining of the abdomen.

## **Study Advocates for FDA Regulation of Cosmetic Talc**

The most recent study of 75 cosmetic talc cases included four that were occupationally related: Either a barber or cosmetologist or a family member sweeping the barbershop.

Mean age at diagnosis was 61, which is eight years younger than the national average for mesothelioma diagnosis. Twelve of the cases were diagnosed before age 45.

The average exposure duration was 33 years, and the mean latency from time of first exposure to diagnosis was 50 years.

Levels of exposure were not examined, but all subjects said they were repeatedly exposed for decades. The information was obtained through medical and legal consultations.

Emory, like many others, believes the FDA should move toward the regulation of cosmetic talc products.

"Large-scale controlled studies will be required to assess the prospective risk of developing mesothelioma following repeated exposures to talc," the authors wrote. "The poor prognosis of mesothelioma may warrant regulation, or the withdrawal of cosmetic talc from the market."



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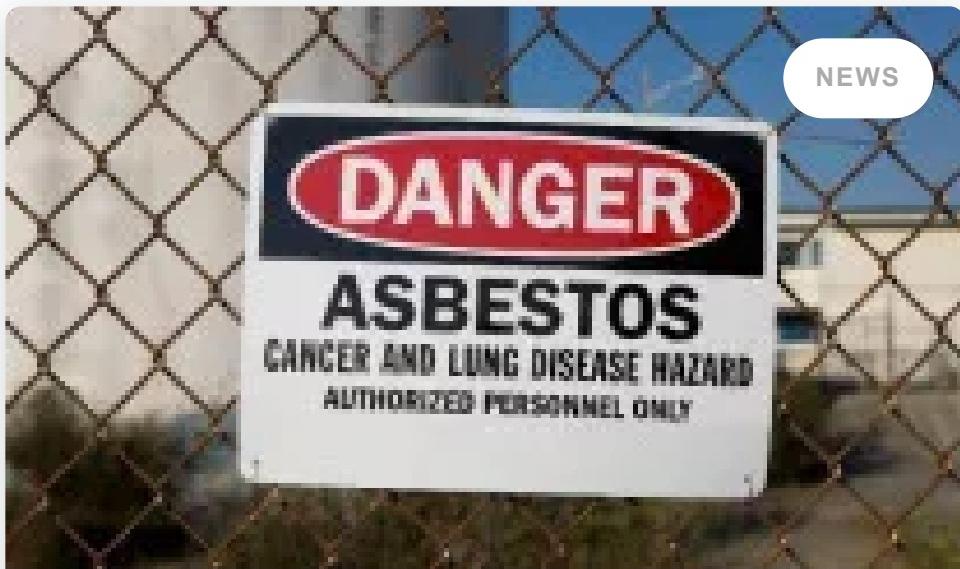
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Tim Povtak is an award-winning writer with more than 30 years of reporting national and international news. His specialty is interviewing top mesothelioma specialists and researchers, reporting the latest news at mesothelioma cancer centers and talking with survivors and caregivers.

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The sources on all content featured in The Mesothelioma Center at Asbestos.com include medical and scientific studies, peer-reviewed studies and other research documents from reputable organizations.

1. Emory, T. et al. (2020, March 16). Malignant mesothelioma following repeated exposures to cosmetic talc: A case series of 75 patients. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ajim.23106>
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